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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to observe the prewriting processes of four high and four low writing apprehensive college students and to explore any composing patterns that seemed characteristic of the two groups. During the study, each of the eight participants attended at least four 90-minute sessions that were designed to document the complex processes of composing from a number of different perspectives. In all, four methods of indirect observation were used to gather data: timed codings of composing aloud activities, videotaped interviews concerning the mental processes students employed in composing, thinking aloud protocols, and videotaped recording of the students' physical behaviors during composing. The main conclusion of the study was that the high and low apprehensive students approached composing tasks with different attitudes, perceptions, and expectations. The four high apprehensive students approached writing with anxiety, and tended to rush through the task without planning. The low apprehensives were confident about their writing ability, but did not always enjoy composing. They tended to use several prewriting strategies and to plan their work. They also expected to write well. (The coding schema used in the study is appended.) (FL)

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THE COMPOSING PROCESSES OF HIGH AND LOW WRITING APPREHENSIVES: A MODIFIED CASE STUDY

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The purpose of this research was to observe and characterize the predrafting processes of four high and four low writing apprehensives and to explore any composing patterns that seemed characteristic of these two groups. The first part of this paper provides background on the research that has been carried out in writing apprehension; summarizes the goals of the original investigation, a study conducted in 1979 with the help of an NCTE research grant; describes the research methods used by the researcher; and details the various sources of data used during the investigation. The second part of the paper summarizes the findings and the conclusions of the study and provides suggestions for future research.

Background

The term "writing apprehension," originally coined in 1975 by Daly and Miller (1975 b), refers to a generalized tendency to experience "some form of anxiety when faced with the task of encoding written messages." Much of the early research in writing apprehension was concerned with defining the theoretical construct of writing apprehension and establishing the validity of the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), an instrument that appears to measure that construct (Daly and Miller, 1975, b, c). Later research has explored the correlative and predictive functions of the WAT. Specific studies have connected scores on the WAT with choice of academic majors and careers (Daly and Shamo, 1976, 1978), scores on self-concept and self-confidence measures (Daly, 1979), and performance on various assessments of writing skill and writing quality, (Daly, 1977, 1978, b, c; Daly and Miller, 1975 a, d).

To date, however, no substantive research has been done to define the relationship between writing apprehension and the processes students employ as they compose. It is not even certain, for example, how or to what extent the theoretical construct of writing apprehension is evidenced during the act of composing, whether, in other words, there are any definable differences between the composing processes of high and low apprehensives. The current study was designed to address this particular question.

Purpose

The research project reported in this paper had three main goals:

1. To record the composing processes of several high and several low writing apprehensives engaged in situations involving tasks of academic writing.

2. To analyze the composing processes of both groups when faced with a ask of academic writing.

3. To examine the results of this analysis for evidence of differences attributable to writing apprehension.

Although the original study recorded and analyzed all the predrafting, drafting, and postdrafting processes of eight subjects during two typical academic writing tasks, this paper, due to limited space, will report only the data and findings that pertain specifically to the predrafting processes of these subjects.

In using the term "predrafting," the author does not mean to suggest that writing is easily divided into distinct stages or that the behaviors and processes involved in writing are completely linear. Rather, the term "predrafting" is used descriptively to refer to the broad temporal movement that begins when a writing assignment is handed out and ends when a first draft is begun. Within this period, a variety of behaviors and processes occur and reoccur in a complex pattern of recursive composing activity.

Procedures

The pilot study and investigation reported in this paper were carried out at The University of Texas-Austin in the fall semester of 1979. The following subsections detail the methods that were used in this research.

The Sample

The sampling procedure for this study involved two stages. During the first stage, four sections of first semester freshman composition students were randomly selected to participate in the investigation. A study completed by Witte and Faigley (1980) at the same institution indicated that students in twenty randomly selected sections of this first semester composition course did not differ significantly from students enrolled in other sections of the same course in either ECT scores or verbal and mathematics scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

During the second stage of the sampling procedure, the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) was administered to the eighty-six students enrolled in these four sections. Four high apprehensives, two males and two females, were randomly selected from those students who scored in the top twenty percent of the sample on the WAT, and four low apprehensives, two males and two females, were randomly

selected from those students who scored in the bottom twenty percent on the same test. These eight individuals were used as the case-study subjects for the investigation.

The Investigation

During the current study, each of the eight subjects attended at least four hour- nd-a-half sessions. These sessions were designed to document the complex processes of composing from a number of different perspectives, using a number of different methods of observation as outlined below:

Session 1: Students were asked to detail, in a role-playing scenario, the processes they used when they wrote a typical freshman composition. These interviews were tape recorded and later analyzed for information about subjects' composing behaviors. Subjects also went through a program designed to allow them practice in the technique of thinking aloud as they composed. In this program, students practiced thinking aloud as they responded to an academic writing assignment and watched video tapes of their own composing aloud efforts before they engaged in Sessions 2 and 3.

Sessions 2 and 3: Students were asked to compose aloud in response to two carefully designed assignments (persuasive aim, narrative mode) such as they might encounter in a freshman English class. Assignment 1 asked subjects to write a speech for an audience of high school seniors in which they revealed the one thing they wished they had known before going to college. The writers were asked to use an illustrative narrative from their own experience to persuade the audience to accept and profit from their advice. Assignment 2 asked subjects to write a speech for a board of policy makers at the high school they had attended before coming to college. In the speech, subjects were asked to tell of one practice at the school that was outmoded or unfair and to use an illustrative narrative from their own experience to persuade their audience to change this practice. Subjects were not given a time limit for their composing efforts. All composing-aloud sessions were videotaped. Later protocol transcriptions were taken from these video recordings.

In addition, all composing activities taking place during these

composing-aloud sessions were coded, using a schema synthesized from the works of Flower and Hayes (1979), Nold (1979), Perl (1979), and Sommers (1978). The components of this schema were identified from observations and interviews completed during a pilot study that took place before the main investigation was begun. During the major study, this coding was placed on a time continuum, similar to one developed by Perl (1979 a). The coding schema is reproduced in Appendix A.

Session 4: Students were shown certain segments of their composing-aloud videotapes and asked to try to recall the mental processes that they employed in the featured situations. The videotaped segments were chosen for this purpose because they included pauses in composing-aloud commentary, examples of frequently repeated composing activities, or unusual composing activities. After these interviews, subjects were also asked about their past composition instruction and experiences, and about their current attitudes toward composing.

Methods of coding, timing, and recording composing activities; interviewing subjects; and making video and audio recordings were refined during the pilot study that was conducted prior to the main investigation.

Analyzing the Data

In all, four methods of indirect observation were employed to study composing processes in the current investigation:

1. Timed codings of composing-aloud activities during Sessions 2 and 3;

2. Two video-taped interviews with each high or low apprehensive during Sessions 1 and 4;

3. Thinking-aloud protocols from Sessions 2 and 3; and

4. Video recordings of subjects' physical behaviors during composing-aloud sessions;

Data gathered from each of these sources used during the study was cross-checked with data gathered from the other sources to provide the most accurate possible profiles of composing processes.

Findings

Each of the major findings presented in this section is supported by data taken from multiple sources within the study. Data from retrospective and introspective interviews are represented in the form of direct quotations. The numerical data taken from the codings of subjects' activities and the protocol transcripts are in tabular form. These tables represent average percentages and average amounts of predrafting time spent on various composing activities by individuals and by groups. As collections of figures generated from a small sample and averaged to illustrate group patterns, these tables should be interpreted with caution. They provide only descriptive statistics for this particular study and are not meant to represent generalizable findings.

The individual variations evident within groups identified in these tables should be carefully noted. Not all high or low writing apprehensives in this study shared the same difficulties, the same skill limitations, the same composing processes--in fact, each of the eight subjects manifested writing apprehension, or the lack of apprehension, in a slightly different way. Hence, these numerical comparisons reflect individual patterns in addition to characteristic group composing patterns of high and low writing apprehensives.

An Overview

Although the high and low writing apprehensive groups devoted approximately the same percentage of their total essay time to the predrafting period (see Table 1), they exhibited two very different patterns of predrafting activities:

1. High and low writing apprehensives approached writing tasks differently. The high writing apprehensives were fearful as they approached the two writing assignments and were not at all confident of their ability to successfully compose an effective essay. Low writing apprehensives, on the other hand, approached each of the assignments with confidence and expectations of success.

2. High and low writing apprehensives differed in the amount of rhetorical information they extracted from their readings of the assignments and the extent to which they used this material. The four high writing apprehensives were generally less facile at gathering important information about audience and organization from their readings of the assignments than were the low writing apprehensives. Moreover, the four high apprehensives were less apt than the four low

apprehensives to use the rhetorical information they did gather, in planning their essays.

3. High and low writing apprehensives differed in the amount of time they devoted to global planning and local planning. The high writing apprehensives in this study were less concerned with exploring overall structures for their essays before they began worrying about how to cast the first sentence of their first draft than were the low writing apprehensives.

4. High and low writing apprehensives differed in the extent to which they employed written prefiguring. The high writing apprehensives in this study devoted a smaller percentage of their predrafting time to written prefiguring, produced fewer types of written prefiguring, and employed their prefiguring in more limited ways than did the low writing apprehensives.

Each of these findings will be detailed separately in the following subsections.

INSERT TABLE 1

Approaching the Writing Task

The data obtained from interviews conducted during this investigation support the validity of the writing apprehension construct as defined by Daly and Miller (1975, a, b, c). Each of those four individuals identified as a high writing apprehensive on the WAT exhibited extreme anxiety about academic writing, lack of confidence in their ability to successfully compose an effective essay, and a fear of having their school writing evaluated by teachers. As Jim informed the investigator early in the study, "I don't like to write. Hardly at all I don't like to write." All four of the high writing apprehensives perceived their past writing instruction as being limited in depth and scope. In interviews, these subjects reported doing very few papers in high school classes other than English and mentioned only book reports, "five paragraph themes," and paragraphs as kinds of writing they did in high school English courses. These subjects also admitted avoiding most or all types of non-academic writing. Only one high writing apprehensive, Bev, who wrote weekly letters to her family, reported any regular attempts at writing outside of school. Bev made a point of contrasting her

family's friendly reception of her letters to her teachers' evaluative reception of her academic papers.

The low writing apprehensives, on the other hand, were confident of their ability to produce clear, lucid prose for academic writing tasks and exhibited no fear of having their school papers evaluated. All four of the low writing apprehensives perceived their past writing instruction to be adequate and comprehensive. These subjects mentioned writing often and regularly in their high school classes other than English. They also reported writing essays, explications, analysis papers, research papers, persuasive papers, and poetry in their English classes. In interviews, these low writing apprehensives mentioned engaging in a number of extracurricular composing activities including writing poetry, essays for contests, short stories, novels, and letters.

Extracting Rhetorical Information

Although both groups, on the average, devoted approximately the same percentage of their predrafting time to reading the writing assignments (Table 2), the four high writing apprehensives appeared to obtain less rhetorical information about audience and organization from their readings of these assignments. Moreover, the high writing apprehensives used less of the information they did obtain through their readings of the assignments in planning their essays than did the low writing apprehensives.

INSERT TABLE 2

The high writing apprehensives, for example, generally ignored the audience specified in each of the two assignments or paid it very minimal attention during the predrafting period. Of the four highly apprehensive writers only one, Joan, engaged in any planning for audience activities at all, devoting 3.43% of her predrafting period to audience considerations during Assignment #1 and 4.21% during Assignment #2 (Table 3). When Joan did consider audience, however, her representations were one dimensional. She considered, for example, only the age or only the general interests of her audience. During both assignments, Joan quickly forgot her audience as she began to write, making no mention of audience after she started the first sentence of her first draft. As she reported in an interview: "I tried to [consider audience], and I told myself to consider my audience at first, but the more I got into the paper I forgot to consider my

audience, and I just started writing."

INSERT TABLE 3

The low writing apprehensives, on the other hand, consistently constructed complex, detailed representations of the audience described in the assignments, mentioning, in various combinations, the audience's interests, age, vocabulary level, stand on the issues being considered, and general political leanings. In an interview, for example, David described the policy-making board that he imagined as an audience for Assignment 2 as "a bunch of really excited, booster-type people . . . that really want to . . . are really gung-ho about the high school. Those . . . parents that really care and that want to do something about it." The low writing apprehensives devoted an average of 12.50% of their predrafting time to audience considerations on Assignment #1 and an average of 7.75% of their predrafting time to audience considerations on Assignment #2 (see Table 3).

Besides devoting less of their predrafting time to the consideration of audience, the four high writing apprehensives were also less apt to recognize and react to the organizational implications of the writing assignments they read than were the four low writing apprehensives. In retrospective interview comments, three of the four high writing apprehensives revealed that information about audience and rhetorical context provided by the assignments had no effect on the arrangement of their persuasive essays. Rather, these subjects disclosed that they ordered the points in their essays in the same sequence "as they came to mind" during periods of idea generation. The following interview conversation between Sam and the investigator is representative of the high apprehensives' comments on organization:

I: Is there any reason you put the examples in the order you did? Or did you just think of them in that order?

S: I just wrote them down, and I didn't think of the order.

I: Can you think of any reason you might want to discuss them in a different order?

S: No, I don't think it matters.

All four low writing apprehensives, in contrast, revealed conscious and sometimes complex strategies for arranging points according to a logical hierarchy, a chronological sequence, or order of perceived appeal. The following transcript, taken from an interview with Don, is representative of the low apprehensives' comments on organizational choices:

> I: Okay, you wrote down the order in which you're going to discuss certain points . . . Is that the same order in which those ideas or points came to mind?
>
> D: No, it's not the order I thought about them . . .
>
> I: Why did you organize the points in this paper as you did?
>
> D: . . . in this one [Assignment 1], I realized I was going to be talking to high school students, so I thought I'd start talking about the transition from high school to college since they were supposed to be going to college. And then, rather than start talking about study habits in college, you know, right after that, I thought I'd start talking about the differences between high school and college. And sort of, you know, rather than to just jump into college, to sort of lead them from high school into college. And like at the end, I'm just talking about college study.

Local and General Planning

The four high and the four low writing apprehensives also exhibited different patterns of local and general planning during this investigation. The low writing apprehensives, for example, spent a relatively large amount of their predrafting time considering an overall or general plan for their essays (an average of 4.91 minutes per essay as shown in Table 4) when compared to the amount of predrafting time they spent planning locally, or thinking about what to write next in the first sentence of their first draft (an average of .42 minutes per essay as shown in Table 5). The high writing apprehensives, on the other hand, spent almost as much time on local planning (an average of 1.89 minutes per essay as shown in Table 4), as they did planning the overall shape or structure of their essays (an average of 1.55 minutes per essay as indicated in Table 5) and spent as a group less than half the percentage of predrafting time on general planning than did the low apprehensives (see Table 4).

INSERT TABLE 4

INSERT TABLE 5

While variations in the amount of general and local planning did exist within groups, the basic ratio between general and local planning remained fairly stable. For example, Joan, a high apprehensive, spent a rather large amount of her predrafting time, an average of 5.54 minutes per essay, planning generally for her essay. She did, in fact, devote more of her time to this activity than did Karen, a low writing apprehensive, who averaged only 1.54 minutes per essay. Joan also, however, spent a relatively large amount of predrafting time on worrying about what to say in the first sentence of her first draft (an average of 4.91 minutes per essay). Thus, the ratio of her general and local planning activities matched the group pattern.

Organizational Notes

Data from the behavioral analyses of composing activities revealed that the four highly apprehensive writers did a minimal amount of written prefiguring during the predrafting stage in comparison to the low writing apprehensives. The high writing apprehensives, for example, devoted an average of 20.85% less of their predrafting time to jotting down organizational notes than did the low writing apprehensives. In fact, only one highly apprehensive writer, Sam, did any written prefiguring at all (see Table 6).

INSERT TABLE 6

The low writing apprehensives, in contrast, used a variety of very effective written prefiguring strategies to help generate ideas, to help expand and develop ideas, to help plan and organize initial essay plans, and to help inspire later reorganizations of initial plans.

Don, for example, used a combination of diagramming and brainstorming techniques to generate ideas and construct overall plans for both essay assignments. As he explained:

You think of all the different elements that could possibly be

> connected. And . . . you just generate material, and then you connect the elements by relationships and what they all mean to each other. And you generate a lot of unnecessary material, but you generate a lot of material that you see . . . you have to supply.

While Don's initial diagrams helped him produce general essay plans, these plans were flexible. In Assignment 1, Don's diagram led him to consider the effect his material might have on his audience. As a result, Don reconsidered his approach to the subject, produced additional diagrams, and revised his original essay plan.

The written prefiguring strategies employed by the low apprehensives during the investigation included listing, brainstorming, note-making, associational diagramming, and outlining, in various combinations.

Again, variations within groups complicate these findings slightly. Sam, a high writing apprehensive, devoted an average of 14.16% of his predrafting time to making meticulously faithful historical records of experiences that he had had in high school and college and that he wanted to include in his persuasive essay. He noted each detail exactly as it came to mind and placed a great deal of emphasis on representing each episode as accurately as possible. Once these details were listed, none of them were reordered, none were considered inappropriate or uninteresting to his audience, none were discarded as being extraneous to his argument. Thus, Sam used written prefiguring in a limited way to help him generate ideas during the predrafting period; however, he did not use it to the extent or for the variety of purposes that his less apprehensive counterparts did.

Another contradiction of group patterns seems to exist in David and Karen, two low writing apprehensives, who did very little written prefiguring on the second assignment. Retrospective interviews with these two subjects revealed that their responses to this assignment were essentially rewrites of previous diary entries or letters about particularly vivid experiences they had had in high school and that these experiences had been frequent topics of conversation with friends over the past months. Written prefiguring was unnecessary for these two subjects because their rehearsals of the topic had already provided much of the generation of ideas, development, and organization required for the assignment. Both Karen and David devoted considerable time to written prefiguring during the first assignment, an assignment that they had not rehearsed beforehand.

Discussion

The one conclusion common to all recent investigations of composing processes (Flower and Hayes, 1979; Perl, 1979; Pianko, 1979; and Sommers, 1978) is that writing involves a complex series of subtly recursive cognitive activities. The current study rests on three assumptions related to this very basic conclusion, assumptions which can provide a theoretical basis for designing any study of composing processes. First, the richly complex nature of composing processes is not immediately and specifically accessible to direct observation because investigators cannot peer into the human psyche at work. Second, since they lack direct access, researchers who hope to study the intricate processes involved in composing must employ indirect methods of observation (e.g., making protocol transcripts of subjects composing aloud; coding, timing, and videotaping composing-aloud activities; and interviewing subjects about their own perceptions of how they compose). Finally, because each of the above mentioned methods of indirect observation provides only an incomplete reflection of the complex set of processes involved in composing, a combination of several such methods should be used to gather data in any one study. Cross checking data from multiple sources can then help provide a multidimensional profile of subjects' composing activities in a particular setting.

In the current study, the data gathered through multiple methods of observation indicated that the composing processes of the four high and the four low writing apprehensives did differ in observable ways. Although variations of data patterns within the two groups complicate the findings of the current study, the investigation suggests two main conclusions, each of which will be discussed thoroughly in this section:

1. The four high and four low writing apprehensives approached tasks of academic writing with different attitudes, perceptions, and expectations.

2. The four high and low writing apprehensives exhibited two different patterns of activity during the predrafting period.

High Writing Apprehensives

The four high writing apprehensives in the sample were extremely anxious whenever they approached a task of academic writing. They attributed at least part of their anxiety to the composition instruction they had received in the

past, instruction which, in their opinion, had afforded them limited opportunities to practice writing or to practice different types of writing in an academic setting. As Jim noted, "I don't really think I know how [to write]. That's because I write like I talk. That's the only thing I know how to do. I don't ever remember being taught how to write really." Other causes of anxiety about composing, according to these four high writing apprehensives, included a lack of confidence in their own writing skills and fear of having their composing efforts negatively evaluated by a teacher. The following interview conversation with Bev is indicative of the four high apprehensives' worries:

I: Bev, do you like to write?

B: No.

I: Why don't you like to write?

B: Well, I like to write . . . just like I like to write home. If someone's going to read it, I get really apprehensive about my writing, and it's got to be letter perfect . . .

B: . . . thoughts or letters, I don't mind them--depends on the person it's going to. But papers . . . I have a very big fear.

I: Of what?

B: Of grading!

While the perceptions of the four high writing apprehensives about the causes of their anxiety might not be wholly reliable, they did, nonetheless, affect the way these individuals performed when they approached writing tasks in academic situations. According to the high apprehensives, for example, fear of writing encouraged them to procrastinate as long as possible before undertaking writing tasks that were assigned in their classes and to avoid classes in which a great deal of writing was required. As Joan reported, "I would try to avoid them [classes that require writing papers] as much as possible. I would rather take courses where you read and take notes. Then you can just put back down on paper what they give you." The high apprehensives' lack of confidence about their writing abilities typically manifested itself in physical behaviors as well. Bev, for example, holding her head in both hands, would bow her head in defeat over her papers even in their earliest stages. When she began writing, she would

pause frequently to reread her own words and mutter in disgust at her efforts.

During the study when the four high writing apprehensives began the predrafting period, they were primarily concerned with what Jim termed "getting it over with as soon as possible." During this period, their anxiety about the basic task of writing—the translation of thoughts into words written on a page—absorbed most of their energy and was, in a large part, responsible for distracting their attention from the more subtle rhetorical concerns of audience and arrangement. Evidence also suggests, however, that high writing apprehensives, because of their limited opportunities to practice academic writing in the past, had developed or been taught fewer successful predrafting strategies to use when reading and reacting to writing assignments. As Jim responded when asked why he engaged in so little general planning or written prefiguring,

> . . . I guess the main reason is I don't really think I know how . . . I don't think I really know how real good. I mean I figure if I can get it down on paper, that's planning enough, I guess. I don't really know what to plan for I guess.

Throughout the predrafting period, these four highly anxious individuals maintained their preoccupation with moving at top speed through their compositions. They were often so eager to rush through the writing task that they began to worry about how to cast the first sentence of their first draft before they had generated and explored a sound, overall plan for their essay. The high writing apprehensives' concern with beginning and ending the process of translating their thoughts into written words, acted to truncate their general planning activities and encouraged them to be satisfied with simplistic or even incomplete essay plans. This conclusion is supported by the limited amount of general planning completed by three of the high writing apprehensives and by the lack of written prefiguring this group produced.

Joan, unlike the other three high writing apprehensives, devoted a relatively large amount of time to general planning activities during the predrafting movement. Her pattern of general planning, however, was very different from that of the low writing apprehensives. Unlike the low writing apprehensives, for example, Joan did not use any written prefiguring to reflect her general planning activities. In addition, during the period Joan devoted to planning, she spent little time constructing overall plans for her essays and quite a bit of time planning and memorizing specific sentences in her paper so that she could write

them down without deletions, substitutions, or additions. According to interviews with Joan, these behaviors were learned from a high school English teacher who assigned only timed, in-class, impromptu essays. Joan reported being encouraged to make quick, mental outlines and to produce a neat product with no "cross outs." Joan's general planning activities, therefore, were not primarily aimed toward creating a logically organized or rhetorically effective essay as were the activities of the low writing apprehensives. They were aimed toward establishing a quick, simple framework for an impromptu essay and in planning easily memorized sentences that would fit this framework. The complexity and development of her general plans were necessarily limited by this method of composing. Joan's experiences, like those of the other high apprehensives, suggest that she had been taught a limited number of planning strategies to use in situations involving academic composing and had, thus, developed a very limited method of dealing with writing assignments. Unfortunately, because it was the only strategy with which she was familiar, Joan used this method even in the most inappropriate composing situations, as the following interview conversation indicates:

I: Do you plan term papers in your head?

J: I try (laughs).

I: What happens?

J: Usually I don't do very well!

Low Writing Apprehensives

The four low writing apprehensives approached tasks of academic writing with a great deal of confidence in their instructional background and their skill in writing. While they did not always enjoy the process of writing, they expected to write competent, successful essays when they engaged in a task of academic composing. Kathy and Don voiced feelings typical of low writing apprehensives in the following interview comments:

K: . . . I guess . . . it's something I can do relatively well, so I like to do it. Like we did ready writing and stuff like that in high school, and that was always fun. I liked to do that. It wasn't ever that hard for me. I like to reread what I've written. I've always liked to write.

D: See, it's not that I get that much joy out of actually solving the problem. I get joy out of the fact that I did solve it, that I'm capable of it. Yes, that type of thing.

These individuals tended to see writing as a logical challenge or an amusing puzzle and had at their fingertips several very effective predrafting strategies to employ when attacking a writing assignment. The low writing apprehensives collected, for example, a great deal of information from their readings of the assignments. They then used this information to create complex profiles of the audience for whom they wrote and to arrange their persuasive arguments in the order they considered most effective for the rhetorical purposes of their essays. The low writing apprehensives also seemed to feel a strong need to develop an overall writing plan for their essays during the predrafting period. These general plans, which were affected by the information about audience and arrangement gathered from the assignments, often went through several modifications which were refined by various strategies of written prefiguring. The low writing apprehensives did not worry about the first sentence of the first draft until they had generated and explored the general plan for their essay.

Future Research

The construct of "writing apprehension" is an intuitively credible one to most teachers of composition at all educational levels. They know that a class seldom goes by without yielding one or more students who seem to dread every writing task assigned and who seem to allow their dread to come between them and effective written expression. Before we can help these individuals, however, we must examine the nature of the apprehension that affects them and determine in which ways their apprehension acts upon the composing processes they employ. We might, for example, find that some people must realize a certain level of writing apprehension before they can engage in writing tasks, or that writing apprehension fluctuates according to the type of assignment, the context of the assignment, or even the point in the composing process at which apprehension is measured.

While this case-study investigation suggests some very interesting differences between four high and four low apprehensives, its findings are tentative and preliminary in nature. Now that this exploratory investigation has been completed, different types of studies should be undertaken to explore specific hypotheses. Such studies could yield a wealth of data on particular composing processes of apprehensive and non-apprehensive individuals. Longitudinal studies, for example, can document exactly how, why, and to what extent early writing experiences or writing instruction affects the development of apprehension. Studies involving larger samples engaged in more composing

assignments will be better able to explore questions such as the following:

1. To what extent do the reading processes and the comprehension levels of high and low writing apprehensives differ?

2. How are the predrafting processes of high and low writing apprehensives affected by the amount and kinds of rhetorical information (audience. organization, persona, and situation) included in assignments?

3. In what ways does the ratio of general to local planning in the predrafting period affect later composing processes of high and low writing apprehensives?

4. What are the effects of varying amounts of written prefiguring during the predrafting period on the later composing processes of high and low writing apprehensives?

Perhaps the most intriguing questions generated by this study concern the extent to which high writing apprehension is related to writing skill. The findings of this study are similar, in many respects, to the findings of other studies that compare the composing processes of "skilled" and "unskilled," or "basic," writers and the studies that compare writing "blockers" and "non-blockers." Basic writers, for example, like the four high writing apprehensives in this study, have been reported to avoid situations in which they are forced to write (Warters, 1980), to deal less effectively with rhetorical considerations such as audience (Atlas, 1979), and to be less facile at producing "reader-based prose" (Flower, 1979). Similarly, writing blockers, also like the high writing apprehensives in this study, have been reported to operate under the constraints of "writing rules or planning strategies that impede rather than enhance the composing process" (Rose, 1980, p. 390) and found to possess few successful, "functional problem solving plans" (Rose, 1980). These comparisons suggest an interesting possibility: high writing apprehension, lack of writing skill, and tendency to block while writing may all be related, and the investigations mentioned above may well be exploring different manifestations of the same complex problem. Certainly Daly's findings (1977, 1978) which link lower scores on tests of "writing competency" and lower evaluations of "writing quality" with high writing apprehension suggest the same possibility.

It seems logical to assume that subjects who lack a repertoire of successful skills or strategies for completing composing tasks will be apprehensive about writing and that, in certain cases, these individuals will be thwarted by writing blocks. What we don't know is how, when, and why these conditions develop; if their development is sequential and/or causally related to each other; and under what circumstances each of the conditions might be reversible.

The term "writing apprehension" touches a tender chord in those of us who are forced to produce relatively large quantities of written material as a part of our daily routines. Many of us admit to being mildly anxious about a piece of writing we have committed ourselves to completing, an article we have neglected to produce, or a report we have failed to work up. However, as teachers of writing, we can also recognize a much more intense, more pronounced writing apprehension in certain of our students whose loathing of the composing process is exceeded only by their fear of failing grades. This investigation has only begun to identify the difficulties these students experience as they struggle through academic writing situations. It is hoped that future studies will carry on this effort, expand our knowledge of writing apprehension, and provide us with further information about the effect of this construct on the composing processes of our students.

APPENDIX A

Coding Schema

I. Planning Behaviors

Code	Behavior	Source
G	Generating ideas	Flower
GP	General planning: identifying possible topics	Perl
GP 1	a. identifying idea as possible first or last topic	Flower
GP 2	b. ordering with respect to previously noted ideas	Flower
GP 3	c. searching for ideas to subordinate under the current idea	Flower
CP 4	d. searching for ideas under which to subordinate current idea	Flower
LP	Local planning: deciding what comes next	Perl
LP 1	a. identifying idea as possible first or last topic on a local basis	Flower
LP 2	b. ordering an idea with respect to previously noted ideas on a local level	Flower
LP 3	c. searching for ideas to subordinate under current idea on a local level	Flower
LP 4	d. searching for ideas under which to subordinate current idea on a local level	Flower
PA	Planning for audience	Nold

II. Translating Behaviors

Code	Behavior	Source
Tcs	Using two or more propositions to construct a sentence	Flower
Trp	Retrieving propositions from long or short term memory	Flower
Trw	Retrieving words from long or short term memory	Flower

III. Reviewing/Editing/Proofreading Behaviors

Code	Behavior	Source
Rpl	Review planning, reconsider planning	Selfe
Rep	Review for ease of processing or rhetorical effect	Nold
Rao	Review arrangement or organization	Selfe
RIvs.t	Review for intended meaning versus text meaning	Nold
Es	Edit for spelling considerations	Perl/ Sommers
Egram	Edit for grammatical considerations	Perl/ Sommers
Epunc	Edit for punctuation considerations	Perl/ Sommers
Elay	Edit for layout considerations	Nold
Ea (w,p,s,t)	Edit by adding words, phrases, sentences, multiple thoughts	Perl/ Sommers
Ed (w,p,s,t)	Edit by deleting words, phrases, sentences, multiple thoughts	Perl/ Sommers
Es (w,p,s,t)	Edit by substituting words, phrases, sentences, multiple thoughts	Perl/ Sommers

IV. Miscel aneous Behaviors

Code	Behavior	Source
Rass	Reading assignment silently	Selfe
Q	Asking a question aloud	Perl
C	Commenting	Perl
TlW	Talking that leads to writing	Perl
TW	Talking while writing	Perl
Rs	Reading own words silently	Perl
Ws	Writing silently	Perl
A+ (w,p,s,t)	Assessing words, phrases, sentences, thoughts positively	Perl/ Selfe
A- (w,p,s,t)	Assessing words, phrases, sentences, thoughts negatively	Perl/ Selfe
R (a,b,c)	Reading aloud word or several words, sentence or several sentences, entire draft	Perl
Re	Repeating	Perl
S	Maintaining silence	Perl

TABLE 1

Percentage of Total Essay Time Devoted to the Prewriting Phase by High and Low Writing Apprehensives

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	3.58%	7.39%	5.49%
Jim	5.19	36.41	20.80
Joan	33.17	30.18	31.68
Sam	11.72	6.41	9.07
Total Avgs. of %'s	13.42%	20.10%	16.76%

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	9.81%	5.89%	7.85%
Don	28.68	19.79	24.24
Karen	6.07	7.96	7.02
Kathy	13.21	15.07	14.14
Total Avgs. of %'s	14.44%	12.18%	13.31%

NOTE: All numbers represent the percentage of total time devoted to the prewriting phase.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Prewriting Time High and Low Writing Apprehensives Devoted to Reading the Composition Assignment

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	59.09%	24.49%	41.79%
Jim	39.29	20.25	29.77
Joan	5.97	11.45	8.71
Sam	9.60	19.67	14.64
Total Avgs. of %'s	28.49%	18.97%	23.73%

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	13.04%	21.59%	17.32%
Don	8.31	17.70	13.01
Karen	79.49	21.73	50.61
Kathy	7.92	43.30	25.61
Total Avgs. of %'s	27.19%	26.08%	26.64%

NOTE: All numbers represent percentages of total time devoted to reading the composition assignment.

TABLE 3

Percentage of Predrafting Time Devoted to Planning for Audience Activities by High and Low Writing Apprehensives

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	0	0	0
Jim	0	0	0
Joan	3.43%	4.21%	3.82%
Sam	0	0	0
Total Avgs.	0.86%	1.05%	0.95%

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	6.66%	6.66%	6.66%
Don	2.51%	0.88%	1.70%
Karen	5.13%	2.08%	3.61%
Kathy	10.00%	5.88%	7.94%
Total Avgs.	6.08%	3.88%	4.98%

TABLE 4

Amount of Prewriting Time High and Low Writing Apprehensives Devoted to General Planning Activities

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	1	0	.5
Jim	2	1	1.5
Joan	30	103	66.5
Sam	8	37	22.5
Total Avgs.	10.25	35.25	22.75

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	128	8	68.00
Don	117	24	70.50
Karen	6	31	18.50
Kathy	99	58	78.50
Total Avgs.	87.50	30.25	58.88

NOTE: All numbers represent units of five seconds.

TABLE 5

Amount of Prewriting Time High and Low Writing Apprehensives Devoted to Local Planning Activities

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	0	0	0
Jim	5	5	5
Joan	104	14	59
Sam	13	8	10.50
Total Avgs.	30.50	6.75	18.63

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	2	2	2
Don	5	0	2.5
Karen	0	0	0
Kathy	28	3	15.5
Total Avgs.	8.75	1.25	5.00

NOTE: All numbers represent units of five seconds.

TABLE 6

Percentage of Prewriting Time High and Low Writing Apprehensives Devoted to Writing Organizational Notes

High Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
Bev	00.00%	00.00%	00.00%
Jim	00.00	00.00	00.00
Joan	00.00	00.00	00.00
Sam	15.20	13.11	14.16
Total Avgs. of %'s	3.80%	3.28%	3.54%

Low Writing Apprehensives	#1	#2	Avg.
David	20.00%	00.00%	10.00%
Don	16.88	18.58	17.73
Karen	12.82	2.90	7.86
Kathy	65.94	57.95	61.95
Total Avgs. of %'s	28.91%	19.86%	24.39%

NOTE: All numbers represent percentages of prewriting time devoted to writing organizational notes.

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